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Interview with Mike Hastings (1) by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Michael 'Mike' M. Hastings

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George J. Mitchell Oral History Project

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Michael “Mike” Hastings (1)
(Interviewer: *Andrea L’Hommedieu*)

GMOH# 006
April 21, 2008

Andrea L’Hommedieu: This is an interview for the George J. Mitchell Oral History Project. The date is April 21, 2008. We’re at the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library at Bowdoin College, interviewing Mike Hastings, and this is Andrea L’Hommedieu. Mike, could you just begin by giving me your full name?

Mike Hastings: Michael Hastings.

AL: And where and when were you born?

MH: Twenty-first of February, 1950. I was born in Belfast, Maine.

AL: Belfast, what was that like, growing up in Belfast in the ‘50s and ‘60s?

MH: I grew up, I only lived in Belfast until 1961, and actually the first two years, although I was born in Belfast, my parents lived in a village called Morrill, which is about ten miles outside of Belfast. So until 1952 I was in Morrill, and then I lived on the outskirts of Belfast.

Belfast was a seaside community, but that had seen better times. From the end of World War II until really the early, mid-1980s, Belfast was actually a fairly poor city. Employment was predominantly provided by service industries and the poultry industry. For about thirty years, Belfast was the broiler capital of the United States, where you got broiler chickens, and they had some processing plants in Belfast at which people worked, but it was difficult work and Belfast was very much a working class town in those years.

AL: And what were your parents’ roles in the community?

MH: Well, my mother was a housewife; she took care of me and my sister. I have three siblings but, I had three siblings but, my father was a, he had a series of jobs when we lived in Morrill and Belfast. He was good with figures, and after driving a bakery truck for a few years, he worked for one of the poultry companies, and actually for a few years he actually ran a poultry farm himself, with his brother-in-law.

AL: And so what were the schools like in Belfast, were there teachers that stood out in your mind?

MH: Well I was only there through, until the end of fourth grade so the, I don't really have that much memory of my elementary school teachers. I moved around a lot when I was young.

AL: I'm sorry, I was thinking, yeah, I wasn't -

MH: I came from a fairly complicated history, so it's -

AL: Yeah, okay, well I'm thinking of in terms of you growing up and your education, were there any teachers throughout that time that had an influence on you in terms of education? And I ask this because you are working in a higher education institution and I'm wondering if that wasn't influenced from childhood.

MH: In 1961 my father, after a difficult year of illness, died. And my brother, my older brother was, is twelve years older than I am, and he had returned from being in the army and within days after my father died my brother enrolled at the University of Maine in Orono. He took me and my mother with him. We actually lived on campus for a year in 1961, and it was actually in graduate student housing. And so for the next four years, that would have been from sixth, seventh and eighth and ninth grades I was in Orono, and more or less living on the campus most of that time. And so I had a lot of exposure to higher education as a junior high school student. I also was fortunate to have some very good teachers in the Orono school system, many of whom were spouses of professors at the college.

I had one that was particularly good whose name was Frances Hartgen, her husband [Vincent Hartgen] was the art department director, the art department chair at the university, and she was a very dynamic English teacher, I recall. And she really stood out in terms of what she demanded of the students, and I think she got good results, for an eighth grade English teacher. I would consider her to be exceptional.

After Orono, when I was fifteen I left Orono and moved with my mother to Massachusetts, I went to a larger school in Norwood, Massachusetts, for one year, and then I went off to boarding school for two years. And the boarding school, which is a small school in New Hampshire, had some exceptional teachers and it was a very good place to learn how to study.

AL: I want to go back, before we go any further, back to your experience on the University of Maine campus, because that's quite unique for a young person to have that. What, besides getting a decent education in the Orono schools, what else did you learn from being in that environment for four years?

MH: Well, in the early 1960s, this was before the student protests and the activism that developed on many college campuses around the United States, it was a fairly quiet place, and it was still really a, it was kind of a post-WWII hard work kind of, you know, we still had a number of people who were, I think, feeling very fortunate they could even get to college and, you know, many of them were financed on the G.I. Bill.

My mother had always been interested in literature and the arts, and so we did take advantage of a lot of the cultural offerings that were at the University of Maine. I can recall seeing, you know, *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the college auditorium when it was first shown there, I went to a lot of theater productions at the university, went to all the concerts, saw Dave Brubeck and the Brothers Four and the Kingston Trio and those kind of things. So I remember it as a place that seemed to, it seemed to have a lot of life, and it was, it certainly had a lot more cultural offerings than Belfast did.

AL: And so at what point did you decide to go to college?

MH: Oh, it was never, in our household it was, even though my mother and father – my father didn't go to college, and my mother was actually trained for two years as a commercial artist in Boston – but it was never even considered that I would not go to college, it was just always assumed. The question was where, where would I go.

When I was growing, in Orono, I looked around and the best students, the best athletes and everyone else from the Orono school all seemed to go to Bowdoin, and so that, it was very early on, I had Bowdoin kind of picked out as a place that I was interested in. I had no idea whether I'd get in or not, so I mean - .

AL: But you did.

MH: But I did eventually, yes. I was accepted to Bowdoin in, May 1st of 1968.

AL: And did you live – everybody lived on campus then, is that correct? Or could people live off campus?

MH: Bowdoin numbered 925 students when I entered, all men, and most students lived on-campus. There were some off-campus apartments but they, they might as well have been on-campus. I lived in one of them in my, in the spring of my junior year, but it was literally closer to the Union where I ate than many of the dormitories were, just a block off campus, so. But most of them did, yes.

AL: And were fraternities still required at Bowdoin at that time?

MH: They were, and they were still quite strong. I was in a fraternity briefly and decided that it wasn't really what I wanted it to be – I left after less than a semester – and at the time I think there were only twenty-two of us who were, out of the 925, who were so-called independents and ate in the Moulton Union.

AL: Talk about a little bit your time at Bowdoin, what you studied and what sort of experience you had.

MH: Well, I mentioned that I'd been to boarding for two years. I was a solid student in my

last two years of high school, but I was not a great student. When I arrived at Bowdoin, I became quickly aware that there were, many people in my class were far better prepared than I was for college work. And so I spent my first two years in this building trying to keep up, and it was difficult for me. I was not strong in the sciences or in math; I turned out to be stronger in English and in writing than I expected to be. I had real difficulties with foreign languages. And so it was, I think the first two years were characterized by spending a lot of time in the library. And I'm glad I did that, I mean I pulled through okay and I ended up doing, I had a solid academic record here, although no honors to speak of.

Socially, the university was, I mean the college was changing. When I, in my sophomore year they started an exchange program with, well it's called the Ten-College Exchange [almost immediately expanded to the 12-College Exchange Program] – involved Wheaton, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Connecticut College, and one other that I can't think of right now. And they were basically having exchange programs with Bowdoin, Amherst, Williams, Wesleyan, and Brown I think it was, and so there were women on campus that first year but there were only like, I think it was under twenty when I was a sophomore.

Those numbers increased in my junior and senior years, and actually in the class – I was in the class of 1972 – there was one woman to graduate, Susan Jacobson, in the class of 1971, and then in the class of 1972, my year, we had a number of women who were members of our class, who had transferred in. And some of those transfers in were part of the original Ten-College Exchange Program that existed in my sophomore year. And so it was changing.

I mean, when I came to Bowdoin it was still kind of the old model, you know, that on weekends fellows went on road trips to women's campuses, to mixers in Amherst, or they'd go down to Westbrook Junior College, which was a popular place to have, to meet young women. But by the time I graduated, all that had changed, and there was much more of a social life on campus. One of the things that happened during that period, between 1968 and '72, was this, they had this wonderful device called parietal hours, which was – I think it was in '68, they allowed women in the men's dormitories but, you could invite somebody to come to your room but you had to sign them in, and the doors had to be open to the corridors, and it was very, very formalized.

And I can recall in Hyde Hall there would be, the proctor would set up a chair outside of his room with a little box, and that's where you'd sign your dates in if they were coming to the room, and that chair and that little box became a symbol of authority and the Bowdoin students would kick the chair and knock it over and the box would go flying. By the end of the first semester the chair was completely destroyed, and the proctor would come out and arrange these splinters – that used to be the chair – around the little metal box with the name cards in it. And by the second year I was here, the boxes were no longer, and it was a much more open system in terms of where you could entertain dates.

Interesting process and, but by the time I graduated from Bowdoin in 1972, there were many more women, you know, it was on its way to becoming a, I think that maybe the decision to go to coed was actually in my junior year, so I mean they were well on the path to full coeducation.

AL: And what was your major at Bowdoin?

MH: I was interested in international affairs, and they didn't have an international affairs major and so I had a, kind of an individualized major under the department of history, called international affairs. In other words, I did it under the supervision of the history department, and my degree is actually in history, but I took courses that related to foreign policy – diplomatic history, international law, anything that was foreign or, it was mostly government and history related but it was, it was very foreign affairs oriented.

AL: Would you talk about, and describe if you're able to, the professors that you learned under in that department?

MH: Well, starting out initially, probably the most influential was John Rensenbrink, who was a professor of government. He had just returned in the fall of 1968 from a Fulbright experience in, on Zanzibar in East Africa, and he offered a seminar course for freshmen which was, at that time that was very unusual, very kind of ground breaking. They didn't offer seminar courses for freshmen, that was something that only upperclassmen, usually only seniors, had available to them.

And so he offered a course, and I think it was limited to twelve or fifteen students, on the newly emerging African governments and the kind of forces of change in post-colonial Africa. And I enrolled in the course because I wanted to avoid the biology requirement, and so I found a course, I found a course which was that one so that I didn't, so I could then say that I really wanted to take it and it was kind of, we got into it, it was a big deal, and I was able to plea not to have to take biology that semester. And it turned out to be an extremely influential course, and I developed a very strong interest in African studies, which I pursued. And I still pursue it, still involved in African politics and culture issues now.

AL: At the time you were in college, were you politically active yet, or aware, was it on your radar?

MH: It came slow to me, to be honest with you.

AL: Because I ask that because -

MH: This was during the, you know, the build up of, I mean we were well into the Vietnam War, but Bowdoin then, as it is today, was somewhat of a, kind of a world apart. There were some students who had left the school and gone off to fight in Vietnam, and there were one or two who came back and re-, and started in again. But it was, in the fall and spring of '68 it was, the interest in national politics and the Vietnam conflict were, was growing but it was not, it really wasn't an activist place yet. That would come later in my sophomore and junior years. And I think I was probably kind of in the middle. I was aware of what was happening, I wasn't on the cutting edge of being an activist but nor was I, I didn't have my head buried in the sand

either.

Many of us in the class of 1972, we were facing the draft. That's another factor, sociologically, if you will. And so I enrolled in ROTC my freshman year, as did many of my friends, and it was actually in the spring of 1969 that the federal government instituted the lottery procedure. And so in that year we all sat around the TV and watched the general, General Hershey, of the Selective Service Commission, Lewis [Blaine] Hershey, pick out our birthdays out of the, out of a – my, I was very fortunate, my lottery number was 363, which meant that there was only, that everybody, all of my friends except for the people that were 364 and 365, would be drafted before I would be. And so I immediately dropped ROTC and – it's kind of unfortunate because I had a very good grade in that – but I dropped ROTC and I didn't have to worry about the draft, and I was very pleased about that. And I was also becoming more and more concerned about the war, and that concern continued through my graduation.

AL: Were there, did you have classmates that were drafted, friends of yours?

MH: Most of the people who had low draft numbers in the lottery, you knew you were going to be drafted up to a certain number, and so people tended to join programs and sign up, because they would get, they were going to be in anyway so they might as well be in the service on their own terms.

I had one close friend who, I think his number was number 10, and so he immediately joined into a Navy program where he went summers, after his sophomore and junior and senior year, and then took a commission in the Navy. He ended up being almost an admiral when he got done, but he probably never would have gone in the service if it hadn't been for the lottery and his misfortune in getting a low number.

AL: So were there other professors that you can recall?

MH: Oh, I had, you know, actually a number of the professors that – one interesting this is that Senator Mitchell and I had a number of common professors. I mean, the people who were young when George Mitchell was graduating in 1954 were senior, retiring faculty when I was there in 1972. I mean, it was kind of the, we kind of caught them at the, and so I can -

AL: Paul Hazelton?

MH: Paul Hazelton, I took an education course from Paul Hazelton, Bill Whiteside, Willy Whiteside, as we called him, a professor of history. Professor [Thomas Curtis] Van Cleve and Ernst Helmreich had both retired, but they were very much a presence in Hubbard Hall, they retained offices there where they wrote articles and books, whatever, but they just weren't as active teaching. A number of the kind of well known professors of that period were still there: Dick Chittim, who was a mathematics professor, oh, Professor [Charles E.] Huntington, who was the ornithologist who, many of these people I say were very young professors at the time the Senator was here but were older when I was.

And Roger Howell, actually when I came to the, one of my, one of the professors that the Senator and I shared was Athern Daggett, Athern Park Daggett, who was the professor, he's the person who taught constitutional international law at Bowdoin during that period.

AL: What was he like?

MH: Oh, he was a, oh the name, Athern Daggett, he was a Mainer through and through, I think from the Portland area, and he was a wonderful, wonderful professor, and he was a person that – like Herbert Ross Brown, that everybody, you know, wanted to take his courses, it was just kind of a tradition to have taken his courses.

Professor Daggett was actually the acting president when I arrived. Bowdoin, as you're probably aware, has this tradition of all the students, all the entering freshmen go and sign the matriculation book that sits on the desk in the president's office. And so you get an appointment, you get a time to, when you, I think ten of you go at a time, and you walk into the president's office and you sign the matriculation book, and the president shows you where Hawthorne signed, and where Longfellow signed, and where Franklin Pierce signed, and all these things.

And so anyway, when I went through that exercise, Athern Daggett was actually the man in the office at that point. And I think it was a year later that Roger Howell, from the class of 1958 was – an historian himself – was chosen to be the tenth president of Bowdoin. And so we, you know, during that four year period we did switch presidents.

AL: Now I don't know the history of where you went after college, and then where you connect with Senator Mitchell, can you talk about that time period?

MH: I'll try to be concise. When I was a senior at Bowdoin – well, first let me say, I'll go back a year. When I was a junior at Bowdoin I took a fall semester to study the United Nations, and that was a program run by Drew University, which is just outside of New York in Madison, New Jersey. And I spent all fall semester there, and we had our classes in, at the U.N. Plaza, and I continued my interest in African studies and took advantage of the courses that I could find on African studies at Drew.

When I got back to Bowdoin, I found that a new professor had arrived on campus named Chris Potholm. And because he was an African studies person, I asked that he become my academic advisor. And so I started, in the spring of my junior year I started working with Chris Potholm and I helped, I was kind of a student assistant to him, I helped proofread one of his books and I took all of his courses. I think I took a, I think, I don't think from that point on I – I always had a Potholm course that I was taking, in a couple semesters I may have had two.

But the long and the short of this is that in my senior year, Chris Potholm was asked by his college roommate, Bill Cohen, to be his campaign manager, on Bill Cohen's first campaign for Congress.

AL: And they were roommates?

MH: They were roommates at Bowdoin, and very close friends; they were both in Psi U. And so, I guess it was late in the fall semester of 1971, I was in Potholm's office one day and he asked me if I had any interest in getting involved in a political campaign. And I said, I said, "Yeah, it might interest me," you know, I said, "who are you talking about?" And he explained that his college roommate was going to run for Congress for the open seat that was created because Senator, or rather Congressman Bill Hathaway, was going to run against Margaret Chase Smith for the Senate, and that opened up the 2nd Congressional District seat. And it's, Maine only has two congressional districts, and it's not often that one of them is actually an open seat, that you don't have an incumbent running.

By that point in time I was very much against the war, and I really didn't care if somebody was a Democrat or a Republican, even though I was a Democrat. I was just interested in whether or not they were against the war.

AL: So you did have a political identity, just not very active.

MH: Oh yeah, by that time, yeah, that's right. And I wasn't much for demonstrations and kind of that standard thing, but I was very, very interested in the, what was then called the War Powers Act – it went by various names. But it was primarily a legislative mechanism that had been developed by John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Frank Church, senator from Idaho. In the early days it was called the Cooper-Church Amendment, but it later evolved into the War Powers Act, which basically said that you couldn't commit the United States's troops to overseas wars without the consent of Congress.

And I asked Potholm, "Will this fellow Cohen support the Cooper-Church Amendment?" And he said, "Well you have to ask him." And so I, he took me up with him to, I think the first time it was up, I went up to a meeting in Augusta, which was actually a meeting of a finance committee trying to figure out how they were going to pay for the campaign. And then I met Cohen to talk to him in Bangor, in his home, shortly thereafter. And this was some, I think it was October or November of 1971.

And so I kind of, really, I think to, I had a kind of a bad case of kind of the senior boredom and to kind of spice up my senior year I decided to get involved in this campaign, in which my academic advisor was the campaign manager. So I – make a long story short – I got involved in this congressional campaign in, as a senior here at Bowdoin.

AL: Now, tell me about that campaign – it's okay, go into details – in terms of what your involvement was and how it developed, the campaign itself.

MH: I guess I was what they call the inside man for Androscoggin and Oxford Counties, my job was to, I was the organizer, the overall organizer for the congressional campaign in Oxford

County, which is predominantly Republican and conservative, and Androscoggin County which is predominantly Democratic and conservative. And so I had, my job was to establish a campaign office in Lewiston, to set up some initial fund-raising events, to organize other volunteers – including some Bowdoin students, but not exclusively Bowdoin students – doing things like signing petitions, standard campaign work. Getting petitions signed for the candidate, holding coffees to, you know, to expose him to the local population, trying to develop accurate lists of voters, likely voters, build a network.

But I was the inside guy, I wasn't the person who actually went out and, I was organizing, I was kind of at the, behind the scenes doing the work, and then there were other people who were, we had a, you know, a person who was very good at getting volunteers, and somebody else who was, you know, good at fund-raising and things of that sort. So I did that throughout the spring of my senior year here, and there was a job for me after I graduated, I lived in Cundy's Harbor during the summer, and I worked in Lewiston-Auburn and into Oxford County.

That was the summer of the "Cohen walk". This is now a fairly shopworn gimmick, but it was very new back then, is when Cohen actually walked from Gilead on the Maine-New Hampshire border, across the state to Houlton, and we had, the walk was a fairly complicated device because we had to have vehicles ahead of him and behind him, and they had to have signs on them and they, and we had, and it was, you had to do a lot of advance work, and you had the candidate stay in people's homes. And this was a, as I say, a new device, and it was, it had only been used, I think Lawton Chiles had used the device in Florida, and Dan Walker, who later became governor of Pennsylvania, had used it in his campaign in Illinois. But I think Cohen was the third person to use the walk as a way to garner attention.

In my area, the area that I was responsible in Lewiston, we had a particular challenge because there was a lawyer in Lewiston whose name was Bill Cohen, and he had an office on Lisbon Street, up on the second floor, and so a good part of my time was trying to explain to people that the Bill Cohen that I was advocating they elect to Congress was not the Bill Cohen that they knew that worked down the street, and that was kind of a complicating factor.

The very first fund raiser that I organized was in the living room of a young lady named Olympia Snowe, in Auburn. I got to see, you know, my first political experience was dealing with the Maine state Republican hierarchy and party, which was fascinating and it was, I was to learn that it was very different from the Democratic, it's Democratic counterpart in many ways.

AL: What ways?

MH: Well, it was, it was extremely business oriented, I mean the people who were most active were small business owners or family owned business people. There was an element of kind of more conservative people, there were moderates in the Republican state committee and then there were more conservative people, and there was kind of a battle between them. And that summer it was, that battle was apparent because we had Robert A.G. Monks, who was a Portland-based businessman, was running against Margaret Chase Smith, and he was seen to be

as the more moderate or liberal, and she was actually, at that point in her career, seen to be as conservative, because she was solidly for the war, and Cohen was seen to be more in the Monks side of things, more of a moderate. And I learned a lot about local politics that summer.

I left, I had applied to graduate school – I was going to graduate school at George Washington University in Washington D.C., and so I had to leave about Labor Day to start attending classes down there, so I left two months before the general election. And I, about, he, Cohen won the election and I started working for him in late January because he, after about three weeks he was already falling behind on his congressional mail. I was a known quantity, they knew me and they asked if I wanted to help out on the mail, on the congressional mail, so I did that on a part-time basis while I was going to graduate school.

And that summer, that following summer, the summer of '93, a full time position on Cohen's staff opened up, I took it, and I worked for him, I ended up working for him for eight years.

AL: Oh, that's a long period of time. And what sorts of different positions did you hold in (*unintelligible*)?

MH: Well, my love was foreign policy but unfortunately that's not what the position was that they had available for me. I started out as the person on his staff responsible for his work on the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, which, that was a committee – it no longer exists – but it was a committee, it was of great importance to the citizens of Maine, particularly the citizens of Maine who lived on the coast. That committee had jurisdiction over fishing and fishing policy, national fishing policy, and so that was the committee out of which the Two Hundred Mile Limit Bill came, the act which extended U.S. jurisdiction over fishing from twelve miles out to two hundred. And that eventually was enacted into law in 1976, and so I worked on that for four years.

But the committee also had, it also had jurisdiction over maritime policy which, you know, ships, merchant shipping, and it was, one of its subcommittees was run by John Dingell, who is still in the Congress today, John Dingell of Detroit, called, it was the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Conservation and the Environment, and so things like trapping policies, steel-jawed traps and their uses, you know, there were some hunting and fishing, and National Environmental Policy Act was involved there as well, NEPA. That was a Dingell, Dingell claimed credit for that on the House side, and of course Senator Muskie deserved the credit for it on the Senate side.

So I did that, and I also did – but you know, in the House, House congressional staffs, every member of the House represents roughly the same number of people, and so they have the same number of personal staff people. And the number's not great, and so, and you have to split your personal staff people between those who work for you in the state and those who work for you in Washington.

The 2nd Congressional District of Maine is the largest, geographically, east of the Mississippi

River, and so what that means is that you tend to have a lot of your people in the state, and it leaves a relatively small group in Washington, and those who are there working on legislation have many issue areas that they have to cover. And so in addition to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, I had to handle all agricultural legislation, you know, I had to handle, over the eight years it seemed like I handled everything.

Now, Cohen was only actually in the House six years, in the 93rd, 94th, 95th Congresses, and then he ran for Senate against Bill Hathaway in 1979, no, excuse me, 1976. Excuse me, '78. I remember it because my oldest son was born that year, 1978 was the election year. And he won, and I moved with him from the House to the Senate, and finally got to do my foreign policy and defense work. So I was, I became his staff person for the Armed Services Committee in the Senate.

AL: What was it like to work for Representative and then Senator Cohen? Sort of looking at the other people you've worked for over the years, how was he? What was he like and how was he different?

MH: Well, these were very interesting times because when I worked for Cohen in the House, it was during the whole Watergate period. And I actually handled some of the, I handled one subcommittee on the Judiciary during Watergate; I was actually – not the one that Mrs. Clinton worked on – but one of them. I handled the Subcommittee on Immigration for Cohen, on the House side. But I, you know, there were a lot of very interesting things happened: Agnew resigned, you know, Nelson Rockefeller was appointed vice president, then Nixon was, had his difficulties.

Cohen is a brilliant fellow, but he, during the Watergate period, he really wanted to be his own staff person on the Watergate issue. And so he basically organized the staff to handle the other issues for him so that he could devote himself almost full time to the, to going over the transcripts and developing questions and things of that sort. And it was interesting; we didn't see much of him during that, particularly that year of the Watergate hearings. He was down, you know, in the depths of the House office building going over the transcripts and conferring with other Republicans and Democrats who were on the committee.

I will say this thing about Bill Cohen, is that he was very good. He could take staff work that was, well if it came to him A+ quality, it would stay A+ quality, but he could also amplify the quality of the staff work that he received. He could get staff work that was good, that he could make it great. And that's a wonderful thing, and I think many, many staff people who work on Capitol Hill aren't that lucky. You know, they'll give people, their congressman or their senator A+ work, and it'll end up C+ work because the person has just so many other issues competing for his attention and he doesn't do it. But Cohen's ability to take solid staff work and make it seem like it was great staff work is just, it's immense. And I did that. It was also, you know, it was just interesting times to be there, you know, I really enjoyed working there during that period.

AL: And he and Mitchell were, had known each other over the years, hadn't they?

MH: Yes. I don't know that the contact was all that great. I mean, I think that they had some interaction in the legal community in Maine, when Cohen was still a lawyer in Bangor and Senator Mitchell was then a lawyer in Portland, I think that they may have been, known each other through the Bar somehow.

When President Carter came in, his administration came in, and Senator, or George Mitchell was made U.S. attorney for Maine, there wasn't a lot of contact there. But I remember asking then-Senator Cohen what he thought of George Mitchell, when George Mitchell was appointed to take Muskie's seat, and he said, "He's a good guy." I mean, he was very complimentary. And he didn't have to be, I mean if he'd have had some problems with him, he would have told me. And actually I was, if you go actually into the Congressional Record, I think I was actually the one who wrote the welcoming speech that Bill Cohen gave to George Mitchell, if I recall correctly, because I remember having to read up all this biographical information about Mitchell for a Congressional Record statement that Cohen put in. You know, it's the polite thing to do when you have a new colleague coming from your state and you put a speech in the Congressional Record, and I worked on that.

AL: And so after eight years you left Cohen's staff. Was that your own decision, you wanted to change your direction?

MH: It was. In 1980, I was working for Senator Cohen on the Armed Services Committee; we had spent two years working on, primarily on the SALT II Agreement. My interest was in foreign policy, really not in defense systems. I had originally thought that Senator Cohen was going to be on the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, but shortly after, he changed his mind shortly after he arrived in the Senate and, in 1980, and he decided to go – it was the result of a trip that he took with John McCain, Sam Nunn, and Gary Hart, and they convinced him to switch his request from the Foreign Relations Committee to the Armed Services Committee, so I spent two years, instead of focusing on foreign policy matters, I spent two years focusing on defense weapons systems.

And I had decided that I didn't want to do that any more, and I was very intrigued by this new senator from Maine who seemed to be, have many of the same positions that I held. And so I had a conversation with Jim Case, who was the new senator's chief of staff – then they called them administrative assistants, but -

AL: Senator Mitchell.

MH: That's right, right. And they made me an offer to come and work for the Senator, handle foreign policy, to handle the Indian Land Claims case, and to handle defense issues and fishing issues that related to the state of Maine. And it was virtually what I had been doing for Senator Cohen, except that I was doing the more in-depth work on weapons systems in the Armed Services Committee, and so I decided to move.

And it was a difficult move to make because it's, you don't usually go working from one senator to the other senator, particularly when they're from different parties. And the, I decided to make the move in the month of October, and I was actually put by the Senator, the spot that I was given was actually not on his personal staff, but it was actually on the Budget Committee staff, because he had inherited a position in the Budget Committee that Muskie had occupied, and he had some staff slots that went with it, and so I was put on the Budget Committee.

We wanted to stay, we wanted my switch to stay out of the papers, because we didn't want it to raise any issues for either Cohen or for Mitchell, and so I just kind of kept my head down and kept out of sight for a couple of months. And finally Michael D'Antonio, the Washington correspondent for the Portland papers, spied me at one point in the Mitchell office and figured out what I had done and, and I have at home a newspaper article with the wonderful title, it says, "Hastings Jumps, Frying Pan to Fire," and the reason it has that title is that the D'Antonio article came out in the second week of November, right after the Republicans had taken control of the United States Senate. So I went from being a member of the minority staff when I worked for Cohen, to being a member of the minority staff when I worked for Mitchell. And in fact, I never actually even claimed my seat in the Budget Committee because Mitchell lost the slot and I ended up on his personal staff payroll. And so I began that work in late October of 1982.

AL: I think this is a good place to stop for today, but we'll pick it up again. Thank you very much.

MH: Thank you.

End of Interview